



COMMAND STAFF ADVISOR ALASKA

THE ADVISOR

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September 2010

Open Season Health Fair in Kodiak, Alaska

On Tuesday, October 12, 2010 from 0900-1300 in the Administration Building's 3rd Floor Large Conference Room there will be a open season health fair. There will be representatives from a few of the health plans available to discuss health plan issues you may have. I anticipate Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BCBS) and GEHA currently.

My EPP - My Employee Personal Page

Miss the hard copy Earning and Leave Statements (ELS)? Would you like to begin receiving them again, you must access you're my EPP to do so. You can access MyEPP bi-weekly to receive your new ELS or you can elect to receive your ELS's hard copy through accessing MyEPP. Do you wish to make changes to your TSP contributions, address changes, federal withholdings, all this can be done on MyEPP.

If you are having problems accessing this please contact your CSA, Stacey Hofler at 907-487-5458 or by email: Stacey.m.hofler@uscg.mil.

eOPF – Electronic Official Personnel Folder

Everyone should have received a user name/ID and password to access eOPF by now. This is your means of reviewing what HQ's has in your official personnel folder. Please review your records to ensure that your information is correct. If you have questions or find that something is documented in error, please notify me as soon as possible. Looking for a SF50 maybe for promotion or a within grade increase.....look no further this is where you can access this information. What is the most recent designation of beneficiary you have on file – again, log into you eOPF.

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BENEFITS OPEN SEASON

When is the next Open Season?

Answer: November 8, 2010 through December 13, 2010

Federal regulations require an annual Open Season to be held each year from the Monday of the second full workweek in November through the Monday of the second full workweek in December. You can find more information about the annual Open Season dates in the [FEHB Handbook](#).

You must submit your Open Season enrollment change before midnight, Eastern Standard Time, on the last day of Open Season to be considered timely filed. Open Season enrollment changes [take effect](#) the first day of your first full pay period in January of the following year. You can find more information in the [FEHB Handbook](#).

When is the next Open Season – Dental and Vision?

Answer: The next Federal Benefits Open Season runs from November 8, 2010 through December 13, 2010. You can enroll in or make changes to or cancel a current enrollment in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) during Open Season.

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DHS PMS System's Mid Year Progress Review Due October 2010

As a reminder to anyone who supervises a supervisory position. The DHS PMS System's Mid Year Progress Review is Due in October for the period covering April 1, 2010 – September 30, 2010.

Please prepare timely progress reviews and obtain your employees input for their accomplishments over the past 6 months.

LEAVE REMINDERS

As a reminder, please manage your leave:

Time Off awards expire after 1 year of receipt.

Compensatory Time for Travel is lost after 1 year.

Compensatory Time is paid out after 1 year.

Use or Lose Annual Leave will be lost after January 1, 2011.

WITHIN GRADE INCREASES

How many of you wonder when you will obtain your next step for pay purposes? Are you aware of the waiting periods between steps?

GENERAL SCHEDULE WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES

Description

Each General Schedule (GS) grade has 10 steps. Within-grade increases (WGIs) or step increases are periodic increases in a GS employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade.

Earning Within-Grade Increases

Employees who occupy permanent positions earn WGIs upon meeting the following three requirements established by law:

- The employee's performance must be at an acceptable level of competence. To meet this requirement, an employee's most recent performance rating of record must be at least Level 3 ("Fully Successful" or equivalent).
- The employee must have completed the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step.
- The employee must not have received an "equivalent increase" in pay during the waiting period. (See 5 CFR 531.407.)

Permanent Positions

WGs apply only to GS employees occupying permanent positions. "Permanent position" means a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year.

Required Waiting Periods

For employees with a scheduled tour of duty, the required waiting periods established by law for advancement to the next higher step are as follows:

Advancement from...	Requires...
step 1 to step 2	52 weeks of creditable service at step 1 (1 year)
step 2 to step 3	52 weeks of creditable service at step 2 (1 year)
step 3 to step 4	52 weeks of creditable service in step 3 (1 year)
step 4 to step 5	104 weeks of creditable service in step 4 (2 year)
step 5 to step 6	104 weeks of creditable service in step 5 (2 year)
step 6 to step 7	104 weeks of creditable service in step 6 (2 year)
step 7 to step 8	156 weeks of creditable service in step 7 (3 year)
step 8 to step 9	156 weeks of creditable service in step 8 (3 year)
step 9 to step 10	156 weeks of creditable service in step 9 (3 year)

WAGE GRADE WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES

Advancement from...	Requires...
step 1 to step 2	26 weeks of creditable service at step 1 (6 months)
step 2 to step 3	78 weeks of creditable service at step 2 (1.5 years)
step 3 to step 4	104 weeks of creditable service in step 3 (2 years)
step 4 to step 5	104 weeks of creditable service in step 4 (2 years)

If you believe you were eligible for a WGI and you did not receive it, please contact your CSA as soon as possible.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN CATCH UP

Reference: <http://www.tsp.gov/>

What is it?

- “Catch up contributions” are supplemental tax-deferred employee contributions that employees age 50 or older (or turning age 50 during the calendar year) can make to the TSP beyond the maximum amount they can contribute through regular contributions.

Who is eligible to participate in contributing to TSP catch-up contributions?

- To be eligible, you must be:
 - Age 50 or older during the calendar year in which the catch-up contributions are made;
 - Currently employed and in pay status; and,
 - Making regular contributions to a civilian or uniformed service TSP account (or both) and/or an equivalent employer plan, which will equal the maximum allowed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

What are the maximum TSP contributions allowable by the IRS?

- In calendar year or tax year 2010:
 - \$16,500 for your regular TSP Account;
 - \$5,500 for your catch-up contributions

How do I start contributing?

- Complete form TSP-1-C, Catch-Up Contribution Election Form through My EPP (My Employee Personal Page) – see how important having access to this site is.

Will my catch up contributions be matched by my agency?

- No.

What more do I need to know?

- The election you make will only be valid through the end of the calendar year in which it is made. This means that you will have to submit a new Catch-Up Contribution Election form each year. Your contributions will continue until the end of the calendar year unless you reach the annual catch-up contribution limit before that time or elect to stop making catch-up contributions.

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I will try to send out “The Advisor” on a quarterly basis. If you have topics you would like to see posted in this newsletter please let me know.

Stacey Hofler